

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BTRA, PEPR, LY, US
SUBJECT: SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS GROUP VISITS LIBYA

1. A NINE-MAN DELEGATION OF THE U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (PACIFIC) INC. OF SAN FRANCISCO HAS BEEN IN TRIPOLI SINCE MAY 15 AS GUESTS OF LIBYAN FOREIGN OFFICE. AMONG COMPANIES REPRESENTED ARE BECHTEL, LOCKHEED, BANK OF AMERICA, BLYTH EASTMAN DILLON AND FOREMOST-MCKESSON. GROUP WAS RECEIVED BY FOREIGN SECRETARY, WHO ALSO HOSTED A LUNCH, BY SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND SECRETARIES OF ECONOMIC MINISTRIES. ALL LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE BY FOREIGN OFFICE AND CONTACT IN U.S. WAS APPARENTLY THROUGH LIBYAN EMBASSY. DELEGATION REPORTED THAT LIBYANS READILY ACCEDED TO THEIR WISHES TO SEE SOME OF SENIOR OFFICIALS MENTIONED ABOVE NOT ORIGINALLY ON PROGRAM IN LIEU OF SCHEDULED FACTORY VISITS.

2. EMBASSY WAS NOT INCLUDED IN ANY OF SOCIAL EVENTS FOR GROUP, BUT DELEGATION ACCOMPANIED BY FOREIGN OFFICE ESCORT CALLED ON CHARGE MAY 18. DELEGATION, MOST OF WHOM STRUCK US AS SOPHISTICATED PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND LIBYAN MOTIVES IN HAVING THEM HERE, EXPRESSED BEWILDERMENT AND RESENTMENT OVER U.S. POLICY ON EXPORTS TO LIBYA. THEY HAD PARTICULARLY IN MIND THE DEPARTMENT'S RECOMMENDATION
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AGAINST EXPORT OF BOEING 727'S AND THE OSHKOSH TRUCK DENIAL, ON BOTH OF WHICH THE LIBYANS HAD OBVIOUSLY HIT THEM HARD. THE TRUCK DENIAL WAS ESPECIALLY RESENTED, BECAUSE THE RULES HAD BEEN CHANGED NEAR THE END OF THE GAME, A PROCEDURE WHICH BECLOUDS THE ABILITY OF EXPORTERS TO DELIVER IF THEIR PRODUCTS ARE OF BORDERLINE SENSITIVITY BUT NOT CURRENTLY ON VALIDATED LICENSE LIST. ONE DELEGATE EXPRESSED

AMAZEMENT THAT USG COULD SO POLITICIZE OUR EXPORTS IN A PERIOD OF MASSIVE U.S. TRADE AND PAYMENTS DEFICITS. MEMBERS REPORTED THEMSELVES IMPRESSED WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN LIBYAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EXPRESSED REGRET THAT U.S. IS PLAYING MUCH SMALLER ROLE THAN IT COULD.

3. COMMENT. THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VISIT IS THE LATEST PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION BY LIBYANS THAT THEY HAVE ACCESS TO AND RELATIONS WITH RESPECTABLE SECTORS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY DESPITE MINIMAL OFFICIAL RELATIONS. THIS ONE IS UNUSUAL IN THAT IT WAS STAGED BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE RATHER THAN THE FOREIGN LIAISON BUREAU OF THE GENERAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS. FOREIGN OFFICE DOES NOT NORMALLY HOST UNOFFICIAL DELEGATIONS BUT IS PERHAPS COMING TO GIVE EXCEPTIONAL IMPORTANCE TO UNOFFICIAL AMERICAN CONTACTS BECAUSE OF POOR OFFICIAL RELATIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, LIBYANS MAY HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY INCONGRUITY OF AMERICAN BUSINESS GROUPS BEING HOSTED BY SHAHATT'S FOREIGN LIAISON OFFICE WHICH MAINLY WORKS THE LEFT SIDE OF THE STREET.
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